Insights and Best Practices
Focus Paper

Mission Command and Cross-Domain Synergy

March 2013

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and the JS J7 Deployable Training Division

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This Insights and Best Practices Focus paper on Mission Command and Cross-domain Synergy is written by the Deployable Training Division (DTD) of the Joint Staff J7 and published under the auspices of the Joint Staff J7.

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Preface

The J7 supports the CJCS and the Joint Warfighter though joint force development in order to advance the operational effectiveness of the current and future joint force. This paper, written by the Deployable Training Division (DTD), helps inform both the joint warfighters and key functions within the J7, notably lessons learned, doctrine, education, and future joint force development. In addition to this paper, the DTD has also developed an overarching Joint Operations Insights and Best Practices Paper and several other focus papers that share insights and best practices for various challenges observed at joint headquarters. All of these papers are unclassified for broad accessibility. See the previous page for access details. I commend these papers for your reading.

The DTD gains insights on operational matters through regular contact and dialogue with combatant and joint task force commanders and their staffs as they plan, prepare for, and conduct operations. The DTD observer/trainers collect and compare practices among the different headquarters, draw out and refine "insights" and "best practices," publish them, and share them across the operational, training, lessons learned, doctrine, and joint development communities.

We are fortunate to have several senior flag officers, active and retired, assist in development and vetting of these insights and best practice papers, especially this one on mission command and cross-domain synergy. Of note, General (Retired) Gary Luck (Senior Fellow at the National Defense University) and Brigadier General Brad Becker, the Deputy Director J7 for Joint Training, both play an active part. They not only help keep the DTD trainers at the theater-strategic and operational level, but also ensure that they retain a commander-centric perspective in these papers. They additionally reach out to operational commanders to ensure relevance and currency in these products. You will note several yellow callout boxes where we captured senior Flag Officer emphasis points.

This paper complements the CJCS white paper on mission command and the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations: Joint Force 2020 (CCJO) by *addressing observed challenges and sharing key insights and best practices* that have proven effective at the joint level. The paper also brings out challenges, insights, and best practices on cross-domain synergy, particularly across combatant commands and within JTFs, as we observe and experience today the essence of globally integrated operations and cross-domain synergy addressed in the CCJO.

Please pass on your comments to DTD's POC Mr. Mike Findlay so that we can improve this paper. Email address is: js.dsc.j7.mbx.joint-training@mail.mil.

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1. Executive Summary

The juxtaposing of *mission command* and *cross-domain synergy* has clear utility at theater-strategic and operational level for operating at the *speed of the problem. Mission command* is important in setting conditions for military subordinates. *Cross-domain synergy* leverages the capabilities of our many mission partners to increase overall effectiveness.

The *so what*. Three major insights:
1) *Building trust and gaining shared understanding*: Our joint commanders increasingly note the large number of mission partners that they must work with to build trust, share understanding, and achieve unified action. They also note how National and International leaders' viewpoints and policies change as these decision-makers interact and learn. Building and maintaining trust, continuous dialogue, and gaining shared understanding with the many mission partners impose significant time demands on commanders and staffs at combatant commands and JTFs. This may be a markedly different experience for those whose previous experience was at the tactical level. However, it is this trust and shared understanding that enables empowerment, cross-domain synergy, and ultimately effectiveness.
2) *Empowering subordinates to act*: Today's interconnected world is unpredictable and complex. The pace of change and speed of operations is accelerating. In response, commanders find they must share **both** *operational context* and their *intent* to successfully empower disciplined initiative in their subordinates.
3) *Role of the support command relationship and the establishing authority*: The need to leverage the many capabilities from other commanders and partners to achieve cross-domain synergy highlights the importance of the support command relationship, and requires increased effort by *Establishing Authorities* to prioritize, allocate resources, and synchronize actions in order to act at the speed of the problem. OSD and JS level direct involvement is essential to enabling agile, cross-combatant command synergy.

A command philosophy. We find that operational commanders view mission command as a command philosophy as noted in the CCJO. Mission command coupled with the reality of interdependence with our mission partners provides the basis for effective cross-domain synergy – focused on achieving complementary versus merely additive employment of capabilities across domains and mission partners to achieve decisive advantage.

Challenges. We introduce several challenges up front to set conditions for later insights:
- Understanding the many existing perspectives, national interests, authorities, and policies.
- Crafting clear guidance and intent, and sharing the continually changing context.
- The pervasive information environment and its effect on increasing tempo of operations, decision-making, and real-time visibility of tactical actions in the global media.
- Number, diversity, and understanding of the capabilities of the many mission partners.
- The inclination to centralize decision-making to mitigate risk or gain perceived efficiencies.
- Complexity of operating globally across combatant command boundaries and with partners.

Insights and Best Practices. We share insights and best practices centered on:
- Building and maintaining trust and relationships.
- Dialogue to gain and share understanding, and ultimately a co-creation of context.
- Importance of strategic reflection for guidance, intent, and empowerment.
- Reality of interdependence and benefit of cross-domain synergy.
- Importance of ensuring clarity in command relationships.

2. Mission Command[1]

__General__: Commanders at the joint level use some form of a mission command philosophy focused on the *Art of Command* in today's complex environment, regardless of the technological and informational improvements that many refer to as the *Science of Control*. The art of command is the creative and skillful use of authority, instincts, intuition, and experience in decision-making and leadership while the science of control is about the systems and procedures that improve a commander's understanding and support the execution of missions. Effective joint commanders leverage both the art and science.

The Chairman notes in his White Paper that the burden is on the commander due to the complexity and uncertainty of the environment, the tempo of operations, and the number of mission partners. Additionally, while we leverage new technology to advance our *science of control*, that aspect may not always be robust (e.g., in austere environments) and may be vulnerable to attack. This further reinforces the need to focus on mission command.

__A command philosophy__: Mission command is a command philosophy as noted in the CCJO. The key attributes of this command philosophy (trust, understanding, and intent) are in current joint and service doctrine. All commanders exercise varying degrees of control in their application of mission command based on several factors, such as the situation, activity, and capabilities of forces.[2] One example of this is the positive and procedural control measures used within airspace control.[3]

A mission command philosophy allows for the Service and Functional Components and coalition partners to operate in a decentralized manner in accordance with their doctrine and concepts. The Navy's daily intentions messages and Composite Warfare Commander (CWC) Concept and the USAF's centralized control and decentralized execution concept for C2 are Service examples. Mission command provides the means (through commander's intent, mission type orders, and decentralized execution) to operate at the speed of the problem by

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[1] We also incorporate much of this in our broader Joint Operations – Insights and Best Practices paper dated March 2013.

[2] As the CCJO notes, "It is important to note that while mission command is the preferred command philosophy, it is not appropriate to all situations. Certain specific activities require more detailed control, such as the employment of nuclear weapons or other national capabilities, air traffic control, or activities that are fundamentally about the efficient synchronization of resources."

[3] See AFDD-1 and JP 3-52 (Joint Airspace Control) for good discussions on the centralized control and decentralized execution of airpower and airspace control. AFDD-1 addresses how decentralized execution allows subordinate commanders to take the initiative and increase airspace control effectiveness through real-time integration during execution. JP 3-52 addresses the concept of positive and procedural control measures that are used in airspace control. Airspace control procedures provide flexibility through an effective combination of positive and procedural control measures.

increasing overall agility and effectiveness, and enables better synergistic cross-domain operations with our joint, interagency, and multinational mission partners.

Challenges: We have seen the following challenges in the exercise of mission command.

- **Understanding** the many perspectives, national interests, and policies at the international and national level is hard for the commander and staff to digest. It is difficult to remain abreast of the continually changing geopolitical context and national guidance due to its scope, complexity, and many players. (For example, in 2011 the mission in Libya rapidly evolved from one initially focused on NEO to that of military intervention) It is equally hard to rapidly share this changing understanding at every echelon in the military formation to enable disciplined initiative. Subordinates may not always grasp the subtleties of the broader and changing context in which they may have to operate. This can result in the commanders opting to retain control and not empower their subordinates, potentially losing the initiative.

> "I found that common understanding to be the essential enabler for fast-paced, decentralized operations. But the effort required to attain and maintain that level of shared understanding is remarkable - it takes changing how the entire command processes and shares information - and runs starkly against the grain of most layered command structures and processes - and challenges the desire of many individuals and organizations to control information." Senior Flag Officer 2013

- **Authorities**. The decentralized nature of mission command and delegation of approval levels require that subordinate commanders understand and appreciate the many relevant laws, policies, and directives. Lack of a shared understanding of these authorities and their limitations can result in loss of legitimacy, trust, cohesion, and tendency to retain centralized control.

  Establishing and maintaining a common and uniform understanding of authorities becomes especially relevant in operationalizing a mission command philosophy. There are numerous U.S authorities (think of Title 10, 22, 50 and other authorities) and significant international and national authorities (including the host nation) in multinational operations. There are also many specified authorities and responsibilities within the U.S. Armed Forces (such as the operational direction authority of a joint force commander and Services' Title 10 and administrative control responsibilities). An example of this lies in the complex ADCON and Title 10 relationships that the U.S. National Support Element in Afghanistan has with the Theater Service Component Commands (such as ARCENT) and the Service forces under the NATO OPCON of the Commander, ISAF. Understanding and application of these many authorities requires frequent special staff access to the commander as he frames problems, provides guidance, and makes decisions.

- **Information environment**. The global information environment brings several challenges. It leads to an increase in the tempo of operations as we are challenged to observe, plan, decide and act quicker than the adversary. It can also lead to instances of information overload as commanders attempt to process all information before making decisions. In some cases we see that this onslaught of information - driven by the staff - may preclude commanders from taking valuable time for *strategic reflection* on the problem, development of a well thought-out *operational approach*, and crafting of clear *guidance and intent*. In these cases, the commands will often default to a centralized control philosophy as they react to emerging challenges with no clear overarching approach.

Staffs may also be inclined to over rely on the "science of control" relative to the art of command by implementing more reporting, control measures, and battle rhythm events in an attempt to fully monitor, track, and control operations. Staffs may not understand or be comfortable in operating within a mission command construct of trust, shared understanding, intent, and empowerment. Likewise, the opposite may also exist where the staff may have to operate in an environment where shared understanding and trust is inadequate at the command level.

The information environment also has the potential to imbue tactical action with near immediate strategic ramifications due to visibility in the continuous 24-hour media. This *can* lead to risk adverseness and a tendency to over-control and centralize decision making when we may need to do just the opposite.

Successful units *fight through* this by *working even harder to share understanding*, provide clear intent, and trust, decentralize, and empower subordinates to appropriately act at the speed of the problem. We also see commanders using their instincts and intuitive judgment to cut through the fog and friction induced within the information environment.

- **Number of mission partners**. The interconnected nature of operations requires continuous interaction with a large number of our unified action mission partners especially at the strategic and operational level. Building and maintaining trust with these many partners is difficult and imposes significant time demands on commanders and staffs. This has particular significance to flag and general officers as they assume positions of authority in strategic and operational level positions and spend significant time engaging with these mission partners. They will not have as much time available to directly control or guide subordinates as they may have done in previous assignments. Thus, the concept of mission command and the importance of shared understanding, guidance, and intent may be even more important at this higher level as commanders increase efforts up and out with other mission partners. Nurturing relationships must be a constant drumbeat for the commander – in and out of crisis.

- **Diversity of mission partners / subordinates**. Our mission partners - both adjacent partners and subordinates may come from a culture or background in which decision-making is centralized, and where empowerment, subordinate level decision-making, and acceptance of responsibility is not comfortable or expected. Some mission partners may not have the capability to gain the same degree of situational understanding or have the same experience in operations (think of a new U.S. or coalition member to the team) and may require increased support, supervision, or control. Equally important is understanding how each partner communicates. Some partners may use texting on cell phones, some need formal papers, some use fax, some prefer phone, and some will require a formal top down approach. Each partner has a method of communicating that is unique and commanders must devote the time necessary to figure this out or they will waste time with ineffective communication that slows down the building of trust and confidence across the team. Commanders must recognize these differences as they build relationships, and massage and tailor the necessary level of coordination, control or supervision (think different level of intelligence support, coaching, planning support, increased visits and SME support). Ignoring these differences can damage trust and teamwork, and risk mission accomplishment.

- **Peacetime centralization tendency**. The decade of learned lessons in irregular warfare informs us of the value of decentralization to achieve operational objectives and is the basis

for globally integrated operations described in the CCJO. History suggests there is potential for a return to more centralized command philosophies as the military transitions from large-scale conflicts to a different landscape characterized by peacetime engagements and limited conflicts. Garrison operations, tight fiscal constraints, and increased competition for promotion could bias leaders, especially within the Services, toward centralization in an effort to be more efficient and controlling. Our joint headquarters may also be tempted to centrally control the myriad of more scrutinized peacetime engagements. However, while centralization may work to some degree in peace, it may not work in conflict (or a disaster response) in which higher commanders rely on subordinates' initiative and speed of decision and action. It takes time to develop a culture of decentralization and empowerment; it can't occur overnight when a crisis occurs. Therefore we suggest the need to deliberately determine the degree of a centralized or decentralized command climate and culture in peacetime.

- **Service-centric approach to operations**. History also suggests the potential to return to a Service-centric focus in the years ahead as we move away from the decade of war and close interaction. Over time we may forget the potential benefits of a unified action approach as we focus on Service basic skill sets. We may also lose the valuable techniques and procedures relevant to joint and combined operations with our mission partners. This could move us away from a mission command philosophy and interdependent mindset with our partners that are essential for success in periods of conflict and other operations.

Insights:

- **Trust and Relationships.** Building and maintaining trust is possibly a commander's most important action to establishing and exercising mission command and achieving cross-domain synergy. Developing trust up, down, and across gains synergy with mission partners and enables mission type orders and empowerment.

> "In my judgment, key elements to building these critical relationships are frank dialogue, private conversations, understanding the host nation perspective, being able to explain U.S. policy, and being proactive with bad news. Frank dialogue and private conversations go hand-in-hand in terms of building a solid relationship with our counterparts. Culturally, public appearances and meetings tend to be ceremonial in nature, where agreement and face-saving are the priorities. My experience was that real relationship building could occur in private meetings because there it is possible to be open about contentious issues without fear of embarrassment to either party." Senior Flag Officer 2013

Personal relationships are often equally or more important than command relationships in today's complex interorganizational environment. These relationships must be built and continuously maintained through both dialogue and actions – before, during, and after crises. This has significant time implications, especially the time to build and maintain trust and relationships with stakeholders and new mission partners (think about the time required for an incoming joint commander to build trust through both words and actions with the country team(s) or a coalition partner that just joined the team). We see commanders making this their priority.

> "I think we all take building a team for granted and think we are really good at it, but the reality is that most military leaders are NOT as proficient at building teams as they think. We are too service centric and often exclude out JIIM partners."
> Senior Flag Officer 2013

- Observed best practices:
  - ✓ Plan how to build and maintain trust in and out of crisis.

- ✓ Identify the organization(s) the commander and staff will be most dependent on or work with as the target for early engagement and team-building. A commander's time is finite so they have to pick where to invest with regard to critical relationships.
- ✓ Establishing a personal relationship between commanders built on mutual respect that staffs see will spread throughout the organizations and become a critical enabler when the staffs are required to execute operations in the chaos and fog of war.
- ✓ Actively build trust through words and actions, and *continue* reinforcing it.
- ✓ Allocate the necessary time to build trust before a crisis (in phase 0 - Shape).
- ✓ Subordinates can help by demonstrating competence to gain the confidence of their leaders. This is a factor in trust.
- ✓ Include mission partners in commander conferences, circulation, and battle rhythm events.
- ✓ Establish private means and the atmosphere to engage directly with subordinate commanders.

> "Trust must also be earned. If a subordinate has not shown adequate competence in a particular area, they may have not yet earned the complete trust of their superior. There is a difference between earned trust and blind trust." Senior Flag Officer 2013

- ✓ Leverage both the ability for frank discussions in private meetings and public engagements with mission partners to fully share perspectives.
- ✓ Focus on aligning actions and words (e.g., follow through on promises).
- ✓ Broaden engagement to more than just the commander (e.g., staff and subordinates).
- ✓ Consider the advantages of using standing Service and Functional Component HQs to employ forces versus default to standing up adhoc JTF HQs due to the trust and relationships already built within the permanent standing HQs with both the Combatant Command HQs and AOR mission partners.

> "Intelligence sharing is an important foundation for building trust. The commander of a US-led JTF will arrive with information and intelligence capabilities that will dwarf the next largest partner. Traditional foreign disclosure mechanisms are slow and cumbersome resulting in a commander being unable to share much more than open source information. This can/will slow the building of trust and confidence unless it is attacked early. Rather than ask "what can I share", perhaps a better question for a commander is "what can't I share." Once this is determined through a set of operating rules, the commander would be well served to flood mission partners with shareable data and intelligence." Senior Flag Officer 2013

- ✓ Maintain sensitivity to guard against / correct the potential for a false perception of U.S. military leaders' disregard of other coalition members / roles through over-emphasized use of US SIPRNET and US-only meetings.

- **Dialogue to Gain and Share Understanding.** Gaining and maintaining a *common* understanding of the situation, problem, and intent is a significant challenge. This can affect what *right looks like*. National leadership may have different geopolitical perspectives than field commanders. A theater-strategic commander might very well have a different perspective on the environment and problem than an individual at the tactical level. Similarly, a military commander may have a different perspective than a State Department Foreign Service Officer. Thus, doing the *right thing* for one may not be the same *right thing* for another. This also has a temporal aspect to it – the environment is continually changing and the understanding of *what's right* may not keep up (think about the changes in nighttime tactical operations and evidence-based operations in Afghanistan

as the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) matured and asserted its sovereign authority).

We observe that one must continually dialogue with higher authorities and mission partners to better understand the changing environment and perspectives and what a shared understanding of *right* looks like. This continuing dialogue deepens trust, clarifies authorities for action, assists problem framing as part of design, enriches guidance and intent, enables synergy with mission partners, and coupled with mission-type orders, enables us to release the disciplined initiative of subordinates to do the right thing. One Combatant Commander notes "collaboration releases the initiative of subordinates." This collaboration and information sharing has significant time implications for joint force commanders and subordinates.

> "We've got to develop leaders who can take the facts of the situation, apply context and understand."   CJCS January 2013

> "Trust and communication with national level command is key - and should be far more carefully executed than it has been in the past. Expecting an ad hoc collection of civilians and military - many new to their positions - and coming from starkly difference experience-backgrounds to mold themselves rapidly into a cohesive team capable of processing complex information and conducting effective decisionmaking - particularly in times of crisis - is a stretch. We should respect the difficulty of the tasks before them and do everything possible to build cohesion…"   Senior Flag Officer 2013

- Observed best practices:
  - ✓ Recognize the geopolitical challenges that national level leaders will likely face in a crisis. Commanders can assist them by understanding their perspectives while also keeping them informed of theater-strategic and operational military-related perspectives, potential risks, and feasible options. This will enhance trust between national leadership and operational commanders required for the resultant delegation of authorities and standing permissions.

> "Commanders must consider and anticipate possible changes in the geopolitical dynamic. This is not a staff function, but rather is confined to the command group so it does not detract from the business of the day. This is where strategic "thinking time" is well spent."   Senior Flag Officer 2013

  - ✓ Recognize the "*contract*" made with subordinates as a result of sharing understanding. Shared understanding is a "trust" contract for subsequent *disciplined initiative* on the part of the subordinates. The word *disciplined* is key here, signifying recognition (and agreement) on both parties that the actions taken will be consistent with higher intent and the shared context.
  - ✓ Emphasize use of commander conferences (both physical and virtual).
  - ✓ Direct staff-level interaction and sharing (i.e., not just commanders sharing information). Assess this interaction and emphasize as required.
  - ✓ Focus attention on understanding authorities. This takes effort and is often led by the J5 and SJA.
  - ✓ Conduct significant commander circulation (and staff circulation) sharing perspectives (up, down, and across). Scheduling discipline is required here to prevent *circulation fratricide* due to multiple visits overwhelming the same subordinate – all with different messages.
  - ✓ Provide feedback to the staff from commander circulation; they don't have the benefit of the understanding gained through this circulation and discourse.

- ✓ Develop appropriate CCIR, organize the staff, and discipline the battle rhythm to ensure the staff optimally supports agile commander decision-making. Use instincts and intuitive judgment when appropriate to cut through the fog and friction of inundation of information.

- ✓ Develop a communications infrastructure that allows for information sharing and collaboration with mission partners (e.g., DOD, USG Interagency, and Coalition). This will likely require some form of common mission network much like the Afghanistan Mission Network (AMN), All Partners Access Network (APAN), or the emergent Mission Partner Environment (MPE) discussed later in the paper.

> "It is important to have commanders think through what they "can" know and what they "need" to know, how they prepare themselves and their entire team to function in that environment, and how they must sort through what will likely drive events at higher levels and what is just noise to disregard. Not easy, exact or static by any means."
> Senior Flag Officer 2013

- **Intent.** Commanders are responsible to provide quality guidance and intent that links strategic direction to operational approaches to tactical action, the essence of operational art. This starts with insightful dialogue to inform and be informed by national and international leadership. Quality guidance and intent, coupled with risk guidance, enables mission command.

  - Observed best practices:
    - ✓ Make the time to *dialogue* and *strategically reflect* on the problem before crafting and providing guidance and intent.
    - ✓ Bring external players into the inner circle to discuss the environment and challenges. Attempt to see the various perspectives on the problem – the political-military aspects from the national (and international level), the regional level, and from the adversaries' perspective (value of red teaming).
    - ✓ Consider how the operational approach and intent can place the adversary on an *operational horns of a dilemma* by exploiting vulnerabilities and maintaining advantage.
    - ✓ Recognize the value of continuous circulation and sharing of intent, particularly in the early stages of a crisis.
    - ✓ Consider how intent enables the command and subordinates to take on an adaptive stance to be able to rapidly adapt to a thinking adversary.
    - ✓ Co-develop intent with mission partners (including higher and subordinates) to gain their perspectives and subsequent understanding and buy-in. Sample interpretation before issuing is often helpful. What the commander writes and what subordinates read may be very different - better to fix before sending.
    - ✓ Personally craft commander's intent. We recognize this is a common dictum, but we still see planners drafting intent. These draft intents often predispose commanders' final intent and guidance documents and do not reap the benefit of the commanders' personal reflections on the problem and approach.
    - ✓ Continuously share intent, not only in orders, but also during circulation, and in meetings and other battle rhythm events.
    - ✓ Be prepared to change intent based on the situation and reframing of the problem.

- ✓ Do not abrogate the higher headquarters design and planning responsibilities as part of the concept of decentralization.
- **Risk guidance.** Provide risk guidance as an important aspect of mission command. It helps to share intent *and* share understanding by communicating the commander's perspective of his perceived impediments (or hazards) to the mission and force, together with respective decision approval authorities (often through some form of decision approval matrix). This is directly related to empowerment.
  - Observed best practices:
    - ✓ Deliberately analyze risks to the mission and force. Use red teams.
    - ✓ Understand national caveats of mission partners before publicly outlining risk. Publicly outlining risk before understanding national caveats creates the possibility of placing a team member in an embarrassing position (since it is not their decision what they can/can't do in the operation).
    - ✓ Delineate these risks to the mission and the force together with risk mitigation direction (including decision approval authorities).
    - ✓ Be clear where the commander is willing to accept risk. Don't be vague and require subordinates to "suck it up."
    - ✓ Make it very clear *who* is allowed to take what level of risk.
    - ✓ Correlate key risks with CCIR. CCIR helps share to the staff and subordinates what the commander feels is important; such as future decisions and potential risks.
- **Empowerment.** The last ten years of combat reinforce the need to decentralize and empower our subordinates *and staff* to act at the speed of the problem. Those who didn't appropriately decentralize lost agility and initiative, and risked mission failure. We have seen how commander's intent focused on the *what* and *why* versus the *how* enables the disciplined initiative in the subordinates to gain agility and effectiveness.

  Commanders need to take the time to understand, recognize, and develop a subordinate's ability for empowerment and initiative, together with the skill to know how and when to adjust the necessary level of supervision. (Think how some commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan would focus their attention and coaching on a new member of the team, developing his or her tactical prowess until up to standard, and then incrementally empower them.)

  Combatant commands also recognize the need for empowerment. Every Geographic Combatant Command we visit has numerous ongoing missions, including multiple peacetime engagements as they work with the many U.S. Ambassadors, nations, and stakeholders throughout their AOR. Similarly, Functional Combatant Commands are working with all of the Geographic Commands. Each of these Combatant Commands rely on mission command to set conditions for numerous subordinate actions. These higher headquarters focus on design and planning activities and share their understanding and provide guidance and intent to help set conditions for their subordinates to execute.
  - Observed best practices:
    - ✓ Recognize the need not just for *intent*, but also for a *shared understanding* of *context* in order to empower disciplined initiative - particularly important at strategic and operational level. This is related to the earlier discussion on disciplined initiative.

- ✓ Delegate authorities to the lowest appropriate level capable of integrating assets to work inside the adversary's decision cycle. Within this, balance decentralization with the need for the requisite level of supervision. Accept becoming uncomfortably decentralized to achieve mission success. This may include providing assets to subordinates as well.
- ✓ Develop Terms of Reference (TOR) documents laying out roles and responsibilities of deputy commanders and key staff within the HQ.
- ✓ Tailor decision approval matrices applicable to decision approval authorities both within the HQs and for subordinate headquarters. For example, J-code directors may be empowered with certain decision authorities to maintain decision agility and effectiveness within the headquarters in addition to empowering subordinate commanders.
- ✓ Align CCIR and other reporting requirements with decision approval levels. While recognizing the requirement for shared understanding, guard against establishing CCIR and other reporting requirements that may have the effect of impinging on the initiative or slowing agility of subordinate units.
- ✓ Conduct quality in-briefs with new leaders / key personnel coupled with focused visits and circulation to assess strengths, degree of experience, and comfort in exercising initiative and accepting responsibility. Make subsequent decisions on necessary coaching and mentoring, and tailoring of degree of empowerment. (Some members of the team may be empowered more than others based on varying levels in their abilities, their propensity for initiative, and their mission set.)
- ✓ Be attentive to not overwhelm subordinates with collaboration or visits as they are also planning and conducting their missions with their subordinates. We often see deliberate limiting of demands on subordinates for extensive updates during higher HQ battle rhythm updates, rather tasking the higher HQ staff to report on the situation, and then giving subordinates freedom to surface issues and questions.
- ✓ Define your fight. Ask the key questions: What is the Combatant Command's fight, the JTF's fight, and the Subordinate's fight? If we don't do that up front, everyone focuses on fighting the subordinate's fight; no one is focused on setting the conditions upfront for their success.

> "Regarding defining the fight, I recommend commanders monitor the lanes, not just to keep themselves in check, but to give their subordinates the cleanest water to move forward."
> Senior Flag Officer 2013

- ✓ Discipline your organization to stay at the right level from a higher headquarters perspective. We've heard the common adage before "One is more comfortable and will default to doing their last job, and not their new job." Operational and strategic level HQs will be tempted to operate at the tactical level. One commander deliberately kept his headquarters *lean* to not give the staff the capacity or opportunity to take on subordinate headquarters tasks. We continually hear the wisdom in focusing higher headquarters on setting conditions for the success of their subordinates. This is all part of staying at the right level to enable mission command.

3. Cross-domain Synergy[4]

Cross-domain synergy and the idea of interdependence is a quantum (but not new) mindset change from a *vertical* orientation (receiving and unilaterally accomplishing tasks directed by the higher commander) to that of working much more closely with your *horizontal* mission partners as depicted by the shaded areas in the above figure. The attributes of mission command, coupled with the reality of interdependence with our mission partne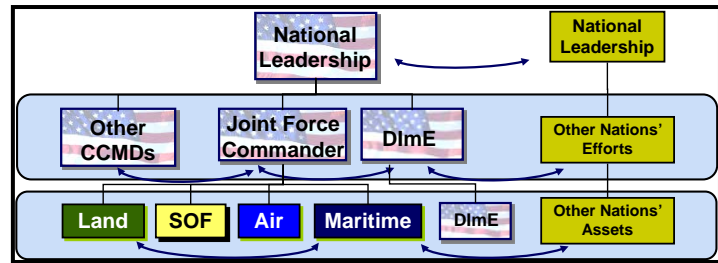rs, provide the basis for cross-domain synergy. General Mattis notes the very clear human aspect to cross-domain synergy in his quote on creating harmony.

> "In this age, I don't care how tactically or operationally brilliant you are, if you cannot create harmony – even vicious harmony – on the battlefield based on trust across service lines, across coalition and national lines, and across civilian/military lines, you really need to go home, because your leadership in today's age is obsolete. We have got to have officers who can create harmony across all those lines."
> Gen Mattis [Joint Warfighting Conference 2010]

Interdependence. We operate as one team with our mission partners – joint, coalition, USG interagency, and other interorganizational players. These are not just words or a slogan; we depend on each other to succeed in today's complex security environment. This is de facto interdependence: the dependence on *access* to each other's capabilities to succeed in assigned tasks (even though you don't *own* them).

Cross-Domain Synergy. We continually observe that the directed combination of military and interorganizational capabilities typically dedicated to one domain (e.g., land, sea, air, cyber, or space) - or realm of responsibility – can produce effects beyond just in that single domain to enhance the effectiveness and compensate for the vulnerabilities of other domains. Our nation's strength is in the fact that we are generally without equal when one looks across all five above noted domains;[5] cross-domain synergy is about using every advantage we have to achieve overmatching power.

The value of synergy (cross-domain or within a domain) is not new. An example is airpower operating within the air domain that has beneficial effect in the land or sea domain. The same could be said for cyber or space. Other examples are in the text box. We find this cross-domain synergy can apply to more

Examples of cross-domain synergy:

- Theater air support to a ground commander. Implemented through a support command relationship, exchange of liaison, and provision of robust integration elements capable of harmonizing air power at the operational and tactical echelons.
- Homeland ballistic missile defense. Implemented through support command relationships between combatant commands, prioritization, and detailed authorities, including ROE, and responsibilities across mission partners.
- Overflight rights in support of an operation. Implemented through open dialogue with Department of State on DOD requirements for subsequent DOS lead in gaining overflight rights.

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[4] Cross-domain synergy. Definition from the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC 2012): The complementary vice merely additive employment of capabilities in different domains such that each enhances the effectiveness and compensates for the vulnerabilities of the others.

[5] A general statement... Obviously we have competition in the cyber arena.

than across domains; it also applies within domains, such as across combatant command AOR boundaries and functions, SOF - Conventional Force integration, and synergy with interorganizational partners within the land domain.

As noted earlier, cross-domain synergy and the idea of interdependence is a quantum mindset change from a *vertical* orientation to that of working with your *horizontal* mission partners. This synergy results from more than just interoperability, i.e. the technical ability to work together even though this aspect is important. It is recognition that the Armed Forces operate as part of a team of joint, interagency, and multinational partners – and depend on access to each other's capabilities to succeed.

This synergy is *commander-driven*; it is *directed* in guidance and intent, and implemented in orders. It is much more than "HANDCON," an often-quoted term expressing the decision on the part of subordinates to voluntarily work together absent direction by their higher commander. Higher commanders are responsible to deliberately craft the task organization and command relationships shaping a command environment in which the components must work together, supporting each other in an atmosphere of trust and confidence to accomplish the mission.

Challenges: There are challenges in achieving cross-domain synergy.[6]
- **Recognizing the reality and need for interdependence.** There remains a sub-culture believing that you must *own* a capability to use it. We have never had the luxury of owning everything we need nor will we in the future. We are interdependent on others; any other view is counter to the lessons learned from operations, the idea of unified action, whole of government approaches, jointness, and the ability to accomplish strategic objectives. We don't have to own a capability to use or gain benefit from it; *however*, we need *assurance* of its availability within the overall priorities of the higher commander.
- **Gaining synergy and harmony.** The challenges of gaining synergy and harmony with other USG agencies and multinational partners are somewhat greater than with our joint partners because there may be no clear authority directing a clear relationship with them to mitigate risks of interdependence. We also find that just because you are talking to an interagency partner does not mean there is understanding; the phrase *silence is consent* does not always apply. We see commanders mitigating these challenges and risks through development of personal relationships and trust, use of liaison elements, and conscious decisions on the degree of reliance upon those mission partners for critical tasks.
- **Limited understanding of other domain mission partners'** authorities, competencies and capabilities (such as SOF, cyber, or space). This lack of knowledge may result in a "supported commander" not knowing what to ask for, or how to best leverage it. We see this challenge frequently. A staff, and sometimes even the commander, may not be aware of what another mission partner can provide and therefore does not incorporate that capability into the plan. This directly limits cross-domain synergy, results in less than optimal solution sets, and may result in mission failure. We see a requirement for partners to be advocates for their competencies and capabilities. Not in a parochial sense, but with a common understanding of the problem and intent, they need to professionally advocate for the use of their capability where it can best serve the mission.

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[6] Many of the challenges and insights noted for mission command are also relevant to cross-domain synergy.

- **The complexity of operating globally across combatant command boundaries** and with functional combatant commands. Despite our leadership embracing the benefits of cross-combatant command activities, we have not yet fully come to grips with all of the challenges in cross-Combatant Command coordination and specifically the OSD *establishing authority responsibility* (and necessary JS support) associated with *globally integrated operations* noted in the CCJO. Think about the planning and rapid prioritization efforts necessary at OSD and JS level for things like reallocation of critical munitions, intelligence support, strategic lift assets, and cyber support. This affects coordination and authorities, and could limit cross-domain synergy and mission success.
- **Interoperability of networks and C2 architecture**. We continually see limitations in the various mission partners' network ability to support analysis, fusion and dissemination information, intelligence and operational orders to enable cross-domain synergy. In order to achieve the desired level of interdependence, commanders require C2 processes and networks that enable required coordination across domains.

<u>**Insights**</u>:

- **Interdependence.** As discussed earlier, we need to recognize *de facto* interdependence in the interorganizational environment, defined as the *necessary dependence on access to each other's capabilities in order to succeed.* Interdependence requires trust in mission partners. It is commander-driven, instilled through an inclusive command climate, and directed in guidance, intent, and orders. Demand an interdependence mindset to your organization, and implement this mindset through development of trust, clear support command relationships and exchange of liaison. Be inclusive and reach out to mission partners; don't only focus on what you control. At the same time, we find that one must recognize potential risks in relying on access to limited capabilities and develop appropriate risk mitigation efforts.
  - Observed best practices:
    - ✓ Continue emphasis on building and maintaining trust and relationships.
    - ✓ Instill a commander-driven command environment of a one-team mentality (team building).
    - ✓ Continue inclusion and crosstalk even under stress.
    - ✓ Use and leverage the support command relationship.
    - ✓ Use of appropriate networks to enable interdependence. One emergent capability is the Mission Partner Environment (MPE), formerly known as Future Mission Network (FMN). (This is an offshoot of the Afghanistan Mission Network (AMN) developed for operations in Afghanistan) The goal of this system is to enable commanders access to a common mission network which supports both the required training and the conduct of operations from Phase 0 through Phase V with any mission partner at any time while operating in the same security domain.
- **Focus on unity of effort.** Unity of effort is directly related to the above concept of interdependence. While unity of command is still important and a principle of war, commanders at the theater-strategic and operational level often must orient toward unity of effort to leverage every possible capability. This does not negate the goal of unity of command; use it where feasible to keep the command relationships and interaction simple.

That said, understand and leverage others' capabilities across domains, echelons, physical boundaries, and organizations to gain *unity of effort* (think cyber and space support to GCCs). Gain synergy through recognition of interdependencies and development of appropriate command relationships, particularly the *support command relationship*. Supported and supporting command relationships coupled with shared situational awareness help mitigate seams and gain synergy. We've seen more delineation of supported and supporting command authorities and responsibilities and clearer prioritization by the establishing authorities in OPORDs, FRAGOs, and battle rhythm events. We have also seen more recognition of the unique Service authorities (i.e., the Title 10 aspects of administrative control), and understanding of coalition unique command relationships and the contributing nations' national command lines, prerogatives, and caveats in coalition operations. We have seen commands delineating specific authorities associated with these different aspects, even as much as delineating the various authorities of mission partners in a matrix-like construct.

Many Combatant Command HQs also see the value of OSD level involvement (and supporting JS actions) as the establishing authority over the combatant commands to rapidly prioritize, allocate resources, and synchronize across combatant commands – again acting at the speed of the problem.

- Observed best practices:
  - ✓ Identify and work with the *key relevant* interorganizational decision makers such as U.S. Ambassadors, FEMA, UN, NATO, and NGO and PVOs. Find the common ground that can be exploited, the non-negotiable areas, and the middle ground that can be worked to achieve unity of effort. This will take significant commander time, and must be prioritized and managed to be effective.
  - ✓ Emphasize use of the *Support Command* relationship as a command authority at the joint force level and the similar *lead federal agency* terminology across USG agencies. Clarify establishing authority, and supported and supporting commander authorities and responsibilities. These authorities and responsibilities are well laid out in doctrine and addressed in the broader Joint Operations Insights and Best Practices paper dated March 2013.
  - ✓ Increase establishing authority focus on resource allocation and prioritization including preparedness to step in and referee disagreements between subordinates *when* they cannot come to agreement. We also see higher commanders emphasizing the requirement to have subordinates work horizontally with one another to directly solve problems between them where possible (what one commander called *self-regulation*).
  - ✓ Where applicable, exercise the agility of OSD as the establishing authority together with the JS under crisis conditions to plan and direct responsive and synchronized cross-Combatant Command operations.
  - ✓ Clearly identify supported commanders to ensure common direction of effort (this is much like the importance of designating a "battlespace owner" as the supported commander in the physical domain).
  - ✓ Ensure supported commanders fully understand both their authority and their responsibility to provide general direction to the supporting commanders. They often require additional liaison and planning assistance from supporting commanders to

best incorporate their assistance. Likewise, ensure supporting commanders are proactive in ascertaining supported commander requirements.

✓ Direct cross talk between supported and supporting commanders without the necessary presence of the higher commander (*allowing them to self-regulate*).

✓ Direct liaison officer exchange – at a minimum from supporting to supported commanders. This assists in understanding and leveraging capabilities.

✓ Develop matrices identifying authorities and responsibilities in a coalition environment in which both coalition and U.S. national command lines co-exist to share understanding of authorities and responsibilities.